

## **LEGISLATIVE BLACK CAUCUS**

**ASSEMBLYMEMBER MERVYN M. DYMALLY, CHAIR**

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## **CALIFORNIA ASSEMBLY PROCLAIMS FEBRUARY 7 AS NATIONAL BLACK HIV/AIDS AWARENESS DAY**

### **HR 4 Receives Bi-Partisan Support to Pass 74-0**

**SACRAMENTO** –The California State Assembly voted overwhelmingly to declare February 7 as National Black HIV/AIDS Awareness Day in the State of California. [HR 4](#), as introduced by Legislative Black Caucus Chairman **Assemblymember Mervyn M. Dymally** (D-Compton) and initially co-authored by **Majority Leader Karen Bass, Assemblymembers Wilmer Amina Carter, Mike Davis, Curren Price, Laura Richardson, and Sandre Swanson**, would proclaim February 7 as the National Black HIV/AIDS Awareness Day in California. During today's floor session, Dymally called for a first vote for additional co-authors to which 74 members of the 80-member body joined the Black Caucus as co-authors. The final vote passing HR 4 was 74-0.

"I am grateful to my colleagues for their bi-partisan support on this very critical issue," commented **Assemblymember Dymally**, who is also the Chair of the Assembly Health Committee.

**Assemblymember Sandre Swanson** (D-Oakland) urged an aye vote for the resolution and told members how his brother was diagnosed with AIDS and lost his battle in the late 1980's. Swanson reminded everyone how important it was to get tested and that had the medical advancements in HIV/AIDS that are available today been around twenty years ago, his brother might still be alive.

February 7, 2007 marks the seventh annual observance of National Black HIV/AIDS Awareness Day (NBHAAD). This national mobilization effort is designed to encourage African-Americans across the United States and Territorial Areas to get educated, get tested, get involved and get treated for HIV/AIDS, as it continues to devastate Black communities.

California joins sister states Alabama, Georgia, Louisiana, Pennsylvania, in declaring February 7 as National Black HIV AIDS Awareness.

"The government's primary responsibility is to protect the health and welfare of the people, and in that responsibility we have failed the African-American community in regard to HIV and AIDS," said **Assemblymember Mark Leno** (D-

San Francisco). “We must redouble our efforts to expand access to testing, treatment, and prevention programs, but those efforts are for naught without also expanding awareness of this devastating disease on the black community.”

“It is imperative that we garner as much attention as possible on the HIV/AIDS epidemic,” states **Majority Leader Assemblymember Karen Bass** (D-Los Angeles), Vice-Chair of the Legislative Black Caucus. “On this day, we will join other Caucuses throughout the country to bring awareness to this issue that has become a serious health crisis in the Black community.”

“AIDS in America today is a Black Disease,” said **Phill, Wilson**, executive director of the **Black AIDS Institute** and sponsor of HR 4. “The AIDS epidemic in Black America will not end unless and until Black leaders take leadership on this issue. The Black AIDS Institute is proud to partner with Black state legislators across the country to build a national Black mobilization against the AIDS epidemic in our communities.”

“More than half of all people living with HIV/AIDS and newly infected with HIV each year are African-Americans,” said **Senator Mark Ridley-Thomas** (D-Los Angeles). “Among women, Blacks account for two-thirds of all new infections. These facts represent an unprecedented crisis for Black America and we—all of us—have to do something to turn this disturbing trend around.”

In California, African-Americans represent nearly 19 percent of all people living with AIDS, of which 80% are men. African-Americans represent more than 6 percent of the total population while they represent approximately 13 percent of the U.S. population. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) reports that Blacks accounts for almost half (49%) of the nation’s AIDS cases. According to the National Center for Health Statistics 2006 Report, HIV/AIDS is one of the top 10 leading causes of death for African-Americans; and in the same year African Americans accounted for more than half (54 percent) of estimated new HIV infections in the United States.

*The California Legislative Black Caucus Members include: Assemblymember Mervyn M. Dymally (D-Compton); Chair, Assemblymember Karen Bass (D-Los Angeles); Vice-Chair, Senator Edward Vincent (D-Inglewood); Senator Mark Ridley-Thomas (D-Los Angeles); Assemblymember Laura Richardson (D-Long Beach); Assemblymember Wilmer Amina Carter (D-San Bernardino); Assemblymember Sandre Swanson (D-Oakland); Assemblymember Mike Davis (D-Los Angeles); and Assemblymember Curren Price (D-Inglewood).*

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